Nic Harris

How does personal experience effect the formation of knowledge claims?

“My name is Bob.” This is a knowledge claim. By asserting, “my name is Bob” I illustrate and exemplify how my personal experience with being called by a single name throughout the duration of my life has led me to believe that my existence can be labeled by the word “Bob.” I have undoubtedly and without any reservation classified myself as a “Bob” because I have been called, awoken, screamed at, cooed over and described as Bob. My claim to the fact that the knowledge “My name is Bob” is true, stems from all the personal experience associated with my being. I know this statement to be true and justified by the use of memory, practice, emotions, and empirical knowledge.

Personal experience can be described as a definition of empiricism. Empiricism is the belief that all knowledge is derived from the personal experiences we as an individual encounter. Empiricism states that all claims at knowledge must be justified by what can be proved to exist, theory is overruled by experience and evidence is superior to logical deductions. A knowledge claim, ideas, thoughts and assertions believed to be the truth, is essentially a statement in which the speaker ultimately describes something that is thought to be valid. The role of personal experience towards ideas, thoughts, and assertions believed to be true is a very extensive one.

Many ways of knowing, such as emotion, practice, memory, and empirical, are incorporated or involved when knowledge claims are analyzed. Of those mentioned I consider empirical to a way of knowing that in some form encompasses the entire question of role of personal experience. Empirical implies or references knowledge that is based upon experience and observation rather than theory or logic. For a knowledge claim pertaining to a persons name to be valid, it is important to consider that the years of existence culminating at the date of the claim, should be considered experience and observation. Empiricism implies that there is knowledge gained from experience; this experience can then be formulated into certain claims of knowledge.

Practice and memory are also important factors of personal experience. Practice in terms of repetition is an extremely significant way in which most people acquire knowledge. This way of knowing is reliable due to the fact that it is simply reiteration or continued contact with a certain area of life. My practice of a certain sport could be a good example due to the fact that I have acquired experience through repetition. Intertwined with practice is memory. Simple repetition is or would be possible within even the most basic or organic organisms. Memory is the tool or way of knowing which allows our human minds to turn simple duplication and reiteration into usable experience. Personal experience would not be feasible if there was no way in which we could possibly build up or ascertain observations of knowledge from day to day events.

Perhaps the most valuable part of the phrase “personal experience” is the personal part. Emotions are what define us. Without individualized interpretations of our feelings or reactions to perceptions it would be extraneous to consider personal experience personal at all. Practice is repetition recorded by memory. It is empirical by nature due to the fact that it is based on observation and experience. But emotion is the way of knowing that creates bias; it allows experience to become personal thereby giving it a role in the formation of claims of knowledge.

This is excellent work Nic. I have read it before, but on second reading it still shows very good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of perception and knowledge. It would be even better if you created a clear thesis statement guiding where you wanted the essay to go, and then made a clear statement about what you concluded. Your many little conclusions along the way should build into a decisive end.

Thanks, AK